

What is claimed is:

1. A method of distributing content to consumers, the method comprising:
 - allowing a consumer to join a community;
 - monitoring access to content by members of the community;
 - determining a community interest in the content in response to members of the community accessing the content; and
 - automatically distributing the content to the consumer over a distribution network in response to the community interest.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein:
 - the community interest is determined based on the percentage of members in the community that have accessed the content.
3. The method of claim 2 wherein:
 - the community interest is compared to a reference to initiate the automatically distributing
4. The method of claim 1 wherein:
 - the automatically distributing includes storing the content on a consumer storage device associated with the consumer.

5. The method of claim 4 further comprising:

notifying the consumer that the content is available on the consumer storage device; and
billing the consumer upon the consumer accessing the content on the consumer storage device.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein:

the automatically distributing the content is dependent on a consumer preference to receive automatically distributed content.

7. A system for distributing content to consumers, the system comprising:

a network element receiving a request from a consumer to join a community;
a database coupled to the network element maintaining records of one or more communities associated with the consumer;
a consumer network in communication with the network element;
the network element monitoring access to content by members of the community;
the network element determining a community interest in the content in response to members of the community accessing the content;
the network element automatically distributing the content to the consumer network in response to the community interest.

8. The system of claim 7 wherein:

the community interest is determined based on the percentage of members in the community that have accessed the content.

9. The system of claim 8 wherein:

the community interest is compared to a reference to initiate the automatically distributing

10. The system of claim 7 wherein:

the consumer network includes a consumer storage device;
the network element automatically distributing the content to the consumer storage device associated with the consumer.

11. The system of claim 10 wherein:

the network element notifies the consumer that the content is available on the consumer storage device;
the network element billing the consumer upon the consumer accessing the content on the consumer storage device.

12. The system of claim 7 wherein:

the network element automatically distributes the content in dependence on a consumer preference to receive automatically distributed content.

13. The system of claim 7 wherein:

the network element includes a plurality of network elements arranged in a grid computing network.

14. A storage medium encoded with machine-readable computer program code for distributing content to consumers, the storage medium including instructions for causing at least one network element to implement a method comprising:

allowing a consumer to join a community;
monitoring access to content by members of the community;
determining a community interest in the content in response to members of the community accessing the content; and
automatically distributing the content to the consumer over a distribution network in response to the community interest.

15. The storage medium of claim 14 wherein:

the community interest is determined based on the percentage of members in the community that have accessed the content.

16. The storage medium of claim 15 wherein:

the community interest is compared to a reference to initiate the automatically distributing

17. The storage medium of claim 14 wherein:

the automatically distributing includes storing the content on a consumer storage device associated with the consumer.

18. The storage medium of claim 17 further comprising instructions for causing at least one network element to implement:

notifying the consumer that the content is available on the consumer storage device; and

billing the consumer upon the consumer accessing the content on the consumer storage device.

19. The storage medium of claim 14 wherein:

the automatically distributing the content is dependent on a consumer preference to receive automatically distributed content.